

SOUTH LEBANON



Prelude to Occupation
Israel Invades
Eritrea
Repression in Egypt
Redgrave's *The Palestinian*

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Middle East Research & Information Project

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SOUTH LEBANON

ISRAEL INVADES

On March 27, 1978, MERIP interviewed "Jihad," a Palestinian who was in Beirut during the Israeli invasion.

Q: You arrived in Beirut just as the Israelis launched their invasion. Could you tell us what it was like then? Were people expecting what happened?

A: They were not expecting a full-scale invasion. They were expecting a major attack on the camps, particularly around Tyre and Saida, and perhaps a thrust around certain border areas to try to link up the Maronite-controlled areas near the border. So they emptied all the camps in those areas.

Everyone was expecting the attack the day I arrived because the weather was just beginning to clear after several days of rain and storms. But what developed was a surprise. I don't think anybody, even the Palestinian leadership, knew what the final Israeli objective would be. They might simply maintain the ten kilometer "cordon sanitaire." The question was whether or not they would go beyond where the Israeli firepower was reaching and continue all the way to the Litani River. After the good fight put up by the Lebanese-Palestinian Joint Forces at Bint Jbail-Maroun el Ras, they expected the Israelis would extend their attack throughout all of southern Lebanon in order to control the battleground. But up to the second or third day it still looked like the Israelis were just interested in pushing up along certain axes within the ten kilometer "cordon sanitaire."

Q: How exactly did the Israeli tactics evolve?

A: The invasion took place along five axes, with more than 25,000 troops—two mechanized divisions and an armored brigade. The major axes were the coastal line in the west, the Marjayoun area in the northeast, the Bint Jbail-Maroun el Ras area in the east and central sector. The heaviest Israeli thrusts were in the east. It didn't make sense why the Israelis didn't initially thrust much more strongly along the coastal highway towards Tyre. The strength of their push was more heavily in the other areas, and the thrust along the coast seemed fairly limited. Also along the coast they made several helicopter landings, shot things up, and took off again. There was heavy resistance on all fronts. Some of the Israeli forces were reportedly wiped out.

By the third day the Israelis weren't able to consolidate their positions in this "cordon sanitaire," especially because of guerrilla tactics and night counterattacks. At that point the Israelis decided to move ahead and changed their tactics from *Blitzkrieg*-type pincer movements around Joint Forces positions to a scorched-earth policy. The Palestinian and Lebanese mobility and guerrilla tactics frustrated them and caused Israeli casualties. I heard reports of one battle where the Israelis had bombed heavily—air and artillery in the east—and made a helicopter landing. The Joint Forces retreated from the area when the bombing took place and some went in the direction of Israel, in effect behind the Israeli line. So the Israelis landed and they had the Palestinians behind them and the Lebanese in front and they got wiped out—reportedly almost 40 Israelis were killed in that one battle alone. These kinds of tactics must have created enough casualties among the Israelis that they in turn changed their own tactics. The new tactic, which began to unfold with fury by the third day, was a kind of scorched-earth policy to try to push out all the population. If they could not kill the "fish" in the proverbial ocean, then they would empty the ocean. By the third and fourth day there was heavy and systematic bombing aimed at the civilian population. Villages were completely destroyed and refugees began to stream into Beirut.

Q: The Palestinians who had been evacuated earlier from the camps, were they in Beirut?

A: I think so.

Q: And that was fairly orderly?

A: Oh yes, yes. Among the war refugees were some Palestinians, but mostly Lebanese from the villages. Many Lebanese villages were completely flattened. By Saturday, the Israelis had covered most of the area south of the Litani, and there remained the last major battle, Tyre. By Saturday or Sunday in Tyre it was touch and go. On Saturday, the Palestinians evacuated some of their troops and heavy equipment, but kept up guerrilla-type tactics. They were going to fight it out house-to-house with the idea of inflicting heavy casualties on the Israelis. The only kind of defense left against the Israelis was to create casualties among them. The Israelis, on the other hand, apparently wanted to have Tyre controlled by Saturday or Sunday and they put all they could into it. A Western journalist, who had been down there, said that on Saturday and Sunday the Tyre area received one shell every four seconds for a number of hours. There was shelling from inside Israel by heavy artillery, tank-fire from the advancing columns, plus airstrikes and naval bombardment. All four were pounding at Tyre. People there couldn't even lift their heads.

Q: Was Israel shelling the city proper, as well as environs?

Q: Yes, because both Rashidiyah and Bourg Chemali camps are outside the city, just to the east. To the southeast, one of the biggest battles was at Jouayya. The Joint Forces held pretty well. The four major battles were at the Bint Jbail area, at Jouayya, Tibnine, and Tyre. The Israelis didn't get into Jouayya for a long time, but the Joint Forces were finally overpowered and changed to guerrilla tactics. By Monday, the United Nations resolution had come through, and things had started to cool down a little bit.

Q: According to the news reports here, the Israelis never tried to take Tyre.

A: That's not true.

Q: It was clear that the Israelis didn't want to engage in the house-to-house fighting necessary to take Tyre, so did they really try to capture it?

A: Yes, Sunday it was touch and go. The PFLP recorded communications in Hebrew of the Israeli rear command saying, "Take Tyre, take Tyre." The field commander kept saying, "It's tough going, they are putting up a very tough resistance. I have many casualties." But the other kept saying, "I don't care, keep advancing." If the Israelis could have taken Tyre, they would have prior to the UN resolution. Tyre was surrounded from three sides, all but the north; the one attempt to take the north was repelled. But the Israelis didn't try to take the bridge, probably to let the population escape. By closing it off, they would have forced the civilians to stay. If it wasn't for civilians, they would have bombed it to stop supplies. But there was also another thesis—the Israelis didn't want to surround Tyre from all sides because then there would have been a pocket of resistance, similar to Tal al Zaatar or something

like this, and that would have been embarrassing internationally. They left a route of escape for the fighters.

There are two important things to recognize: one is that the Lebanese-Palestinian Joint Forces were very heavily outnumbered, about ten to one according to the *Washington Post*. By the end of the week, the Israelis had poured in nearly another division, making the invading Israeli army about 40,000 troops. Some of the Joint Forces' fighters were held to protect Beirut. There are the militias, but they must act as an auxiliary, not the main fighting units. Israeli General Gur admitted that the Joint Forces were about 2-4,000, so even if there were only 10,000 Israelis, that's more than two to one: and with the heavy firepower, it's about a thousand to one. The Palestinians and Lebanese National Movement had hardly any tanks or even heavy anti-aircraft, and of course no air force. They had some spots with anti-aircraft, but that's about all. They had some heavy artillery that's similar to the Israeli's, and they shot a few Katushyas. The strong resistance and good fight lifted the morale of the Palestinians immensely. You wouldn't believe the high morale, everyone was going to carry a gun and go down and fight.

The second important thing is that the Israeli objective was defeated. The Israeli objective was to wipe out the Palestinians militarily, and in the process to wipe them out politically. This invasion has become counter-productive for Israel. It has returned the Palestinians to center stage and defeated the political attempt at destroying the movement.

Q: There's another view of the Israeli objective—first of all, to get that region clear of Palestinians, and second, to narrow their options for the future in terms of pushing them under the Syrian wing.

A: No doubt, that would be the minimum Israeli objective. The maximum objective is to wipe them out militarily. I would place Israel in the international context; for they were under some pressure from the US government over the political settlement issue. The Begin government had to maneuver around the forthcoming American confrontation and to present the US with some sort of *fait accompli*, especially about the West Bank and Gaza, by destroying the credibility or power of the Palestinians, that is of the PLO. Of course, that didn't succeed either.

Q: The first American reaction was very approving.

A: Yes, but that was the first day or two. The idea was to give Israel 48 hours to do the job.

Q: It became embarrassing after that.

A: That's right. The point is that the Palestinian's and Lebanese National Movement's tactic was to extend the fighting as much as possible, even beyond the unilateral ceasefire.

Q: Do you think there was discussion among the Joint Forces about whether or not to fight and risk the Israelis coming all the way to the Litani—in other words, should they just let them take the 10 kilometers?

A: No. That was not the issue. The issue was to fight as long as you can. The longer and more heroic the fighting is, the greater the pressure on the Arab states to join in the situation, includ-



Palestinian school girls build road block during protests.

RESISTANCE UNDER OCCUPATION

The Israeli military command, stunned by the stiff resistance put up by Palestinian-Lebanese Joint Forces to the invasion of South Lebanon, also faced serious problems behind the front lines. Initial Palestinian reaction to the March 14 Israeli invasion began the next day with a general strike in East Jerusalem. In the following days, schools and businesses all over the West Bank and in Gaza closed their doors to observe the strike. Palestinian workers walked off their jobs. In one instance when an Israeli bus arrived at Deir Abu Mash'al village to pick up its load of day laborers, the driver was forced out and the bus set on fire.

For two weeks after the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon, residents of several refugee camps and secondary school students demonstrated daily in the streets. On March 19, Israeli troops opened fire on demonstrators in Khan Yunis, Gaza, killing an elderly man and wounding several others. On the 18th, residents of Qalandiyah camp near Ramallah attacked an Israeli border patrol jeep with stones and a molotov cocktail. In the midst of a clash between Israeli troops and Palestinian demonstrators in Balata camp near Nablus, an Israeli military truck rammed into a house killing two and injuring four.

Palestinian journalist and author, Raymonda Tawil, who was "banned" and put under house arrest for four months in 1976, was arrested again in the middle of the night and charged with aiding terrorists and creating public disturbances. On March 17, when Youssef Marar, a member of the Jericho Municipal Council, went to police headquarters to protest the Israeli army's brutal treatment of demonstrating students, he was arrested and beaten by Israeli military police.

Students at Bir Zeit and Bethlehem Universities, and students from secondary schools in Ramallah and Nablus built barricades of burning tires at entry points to the cities, and stoned approaching Israeli military vehicles. In the first days, students and young people fought a pitched battle with Israeli police near Jerusalem's Damascus Gate. Police forces had to be reinforced by regular army troops transferred to Jerusalem by helicopters.

Israeli repression of the demonstrations has been particularly brutal—reminiscent of the violent repression of the

1976 Land Day demonstrations. Hundreds of Palestinians have been arrested since the clashes began. In the first week of demonstrations in Gaza, 300 young people were randomly seized by military police, given hastily convened military trials, and their parents slapped with fines totaling \$62,000 (one million Israeli pounds).

At Bethlehem University and the secondary school in Beit Jala south of Jerusalem, Israeli troops locked students in their classrooms and shot US-made CS gas cannisters through the windows of the classrooms. Students at Beit Jala jumped out of second story windows to escape the nausea-producing fumes. Ten students suffered shattered limbs that will leave them handicapped for life.

In the first such incident in 30 years, a bomb exploded in the commercial center of Safad (Tiberias) in the Galilee region. Incidents in Galilee culminated with a mass demonstration in Sakhnin on March 30, Land Day, where a monument was unveiled, commemorating persons who were killed in the 1976 Land Day demonstrations.

Demonstrations were not restricted to occupied Palestine. In the first mass political manifestation in Jordan since the bloody repression of the Palestinian movement there in September 1970, hundreds of Palestinians streamed out of the refugee camps at the first news of the invasion of Lebanon. Crowds chanted support for the Palestinian Revolution and solidarity with the Lebanese National Movement. Demonstrations continued for four days until Jordan's King Hussein ordered troops in. Troops and demonstrators fought pitched battles with casualties on both sides. A government communique later thanked "the citizens for their noble sentiments and their positive and sincere patriotic affiliation," but suggested expressing such sentiments by donating blood and money to the Jordanian Health Ministry.

—Garay Menicucci

Sources: Christian Science Monitor, March 28, 1978; Foreign Broadcast Information Service, March 14, 16, 17, 22, 1978; New York Times, March 30, 1978; Philadelphia Inquirer, April 2, 1978; Time, April 3, 1978; WAFA (Palestine News Agency), March 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 1978; Washington Post, March 26, 1978. Plus two statements, one Palestinian, the other Israeli, by participants at a sit-in in the International Committee of the Red Cross office in Jerusalem on March 23, 1978.

ing the chance to draw the Syrians in on your side, perhaps small units who will get excited and fire. The strategy was to resist and fight, the best way you can: guerilla tactics.

Q: Was there also a role of the Joint Forces in the days of fighting in terms of social organization, like refugee aid?

A: Oh yes.

Q: How was that handled?

A: In Beirut, at the very beginning, the influx of refugees was haphazard and disorganized. By about the second day, the Joint Forces rallied to form committees and find food and supplies. The first order of business was to find places to stay. They went around, principally in West Beirut, and took over apartment complexes that were empty or under construction. Second, they took over apartments of people who had been away a year or two. This process became systematized.

Q: Did they know where to go?

A: Yes, I was surprised. Party people were going around with a folder—you could see them on the street, pointing and saying "over here" and "over there." And following them would be families, large families. People from the Lebanese National Movement directed the resettlement process because they knew the people in the neighborhoods. It was a lesson learned from the civil war, to have Lebanese in these positions, and also the Lebanese National Movement is larger now. The PLO aided in a similar manner.

Q: The different groups of the Lebanese National Movement worked in a united way?

A: Oh yes. As for the leadership, of course Kamal Jumblatt is missed, but in another way he was so dominant that it left a vacuum or a paralysis on the second level. Now that he's gone, there is a collective leadership which is perhaps even better.

Q: What is the assessment there of the present situation? To the extent that the fight was favoring the Joint Forces, one could say that Israel wanted a ceasefire. So that puts the Joint Forces in a difficult position.

A: Already by Saturday, but certainly by Sunday, the beginnings of what one could call a two-line struggle within the Palestinian movement began over the question of what to do with the ceasefire that was supposed to be imposed by the UN. It was discussed on Sunday partly with some fear of the fall of Tyre. That's the time I sensed the severity of the situation. One fellow who came up from there that day was quite worried. He wanted to save the fighting forces, so he wanted out: to accept the ceasefire. The military battle was pretty much ending in his mind and in the minds of many of the people at the time. The political battle was beginning. Would the UN troops in essence protect the Israeli occupation? Where would the UN troops be deployed? At the Litani River or before the Israeli border? All of these issues became a political question that emerged on Sunday. What would the Syrians do? What would the Lebanese Right do? Even the traditional Muslim leaders began to talk. Their line was beginning to develop: to



try to argue that the Palestinians are the source of the trouble. So you begin to get the Muslim "street" as they call it, the Muslim masses, being infused with anti-Palestinian propaganda. Given the fact that 250,000 people fled from the South in just four days, there is a lot of resentment. That's part of the political struggle and it has to be handled carefully. There were many discussions about that, about the Syrian role, about the fact that the Egyptian initiative is dead—that's the feeling, that it's dead—about the UN role, how the internationalization of the South is going to have an impact both on the Palestinian question and the liberation of Lebanon.

Q: You said there were two lines.

A: Yes, the second line is to continue the fighting. The Left mostly, especially the Popular Front which was saying: "Fight, fight, fight." Whether or not Tyre fell, they would still fight house to house and hold as long as they can. The tactic is to hold on and fight as long as possible and create an untenable situation first for Syria and then, generally, for the Arab states until the momentum begins to pick up and troops start coming in, or a political battle is enjoined.

Q: Which of these two lines dominated?

A: Well, it's difficult to say. First of all, the Palestinians are in no position to announce publicly acceptance of a ceasefire. Secondly, the Joint Forces had been fighting for five straight days and were really getting tired. The Israelis, however, had fresh troops constantly coming. Rotation was very rapid, estimated at about a day or two at most. Estimates were that Israel rotated in a total of 60-80,000 troops. Outnumbered and outgunned, the Joint Forces could hardly be expected to maintain the intensity of the fighting without open supplies and rotation. And, because the Israelis pushed out everybody—the whole population—the Joint Forces couldn't stay behind the lines as before. By that time the Israelis were no longer fighting along axes; they were trying to take big chunks of land. What they call mopping up is literally pushing out everybody.



Rescue workers dig through rubble after Israeli bombing of the Beirut suburb of Ouzai.

Q: There were reports in some Israeli papers, that the Israelis were amazed at the arms supplies and very sophisticated bunkers they found.

A: The Joint Forces fought well because of this. But with the overwhelming heavy firepower, the fighters couldn't lift their heads even from the noise—their ears would be reverberating from the fire. But a low level of fighting, or attrition, may continue to keep many Israeli soldiers pinned into the area of southern Lebanon. The Israeli tactic in the second phase of the fighting—the scorched-earth policy—was to concentrate armored personnel carriers and tanks in the front lines. So the Joint

Forces try to hit those with rockets; to cause casualties and confusion. In one of the last strongholds on the road to Tyre, they put up a very stiff resistance. When they had to break into guerrilla tactics, there were instances of tanks chasing one or two guerrilla fighters up hills. There were instances of planes attacking single individuals.

Q: In terms of political strategy for the next period, has the silence of the Arab states shaken up any of the political lines within the Palestinian movement?

A: The cynicism was very high. People were laughing, saying, "What the hell do you expect."



Refugees fled with whatever they could carry.

Q: In terms of a war of attrition, will the Syrians try to stop it and if so, will they be able to?

A: Well, that's the biggest question. One interpretation, which I feel could be wrong, went along this line: Syria at this point is not in the same position as when it attacked the Palestinians in Lebanon in June 1976. Internationally it is in the "Front of Steadfastness." So there's pressure there. Two, it is dependent on the Soviets and to a lesser extent on Libya and Algeria. Three, the Palestinians and the Lebanese National Movement could fight and it would be embarrassing for the Syrians to clash again with them. At the same time Syria is afraid of Israel and is fence-sitting at this point. Given this situation, and given the fact that there have been some difficulties with the Lebanese rightists—an attack on the Palestinians and the Lebanese National Movement could leave the Syrian army vulnerable to a rear attack by the rightists. This reminds me of a point: the Lebanese Right actually did not move in with a military attack. Probably this is because the Israelis told them not to out of fear that the Syrians would then have to move. The Israelis don't want the Syrians involved. The rightists were on full alert: in East Beirut there were masses of them walking around armed. They prohibited southern refugees from taking refuge in East Beirut.

The other argument is that the Syrians would not confront the Palestinians and the Lebanese National Movement directly at this stage. This implies that they might do it indirectly, perhaps by cutting supplies. In their present deployment, the Joint Forces are very squeezed. But, of course, they are in Beirut, too. So in Lebanon now you have the Israelis in the South with pockets of the rightist Lebanese Front. Then there's a zone of purely Palestinian and Lebanese National

Movement forces. Then a joint Syrian-Palestinian-Lebanese National Movement Front, which is Beirut and south of that a little bit. Then the Syrians with the rightist forces in the north-central and central areas. In the East and North, just the Syrians. And now the UN forces—it's really a crazy quilt.

Q: What about the UN?

A: I have a feeling that the top political command, including Arafat, are sensitive to the UN and the international situation. But the immediate field commanders and the military groups might not go along with that. So there may be some clash, but it becomes embarrassing internationally to shoot at UN troops. The Palestinians are very careful not to appear to be infringing on Lebanese sovereignty. So, it's a delicate situation which I think means that they would have to swallow some pride, some territory, some tactical turns in order to maintain good auspices within the international organization, and the illusion of Lebanese central government sovereignty and power. But if their strategic interests get challenged, I think the field commanders would put up a fight—that's my feeling. The Palestinians were willing to institute the Chataura agreement, but the Israelis prohibited it. The Israelis definitely did not want either Syrian or Lebanese Army forces in the south. They wanted only Maronite rightist forces, so in a sense they created the vacuum that the Palestinian-Lebanese National Movement forces filled.

Q: Is there some consensus about how long the Israelis and UN forces will be in Lebanon?

A: There was never anything that I could pinpoint as a consensus, except the common feeling that the Israelis will never leave. After all, colons never return the land they conquer. As for the UN, the fear was that the UN would become the protector of the occupation.

Q: How do people assess the whole picture? If it's possible to step out of the momentary high of "victory" in terms of sober analysis, do people in the Palestinian movement think their situation has been advanced?

A: It's difficult to answer that. There was no question that across the board—Left, Right, and Center—that the Palestinians see their position as much better than it was two weeks before the war. Politically: much better. Militarily: there was not a flinch. Politically they thought they broke through a lot that was hampering them. They feel that the long range repercussions work in their favor and it's going to have some repercussions in the Arab world. They say: "This is a thousand Karamehs."* I don't have that feeling. I think that given the Lebanese situation, they may be in some tight spots militarily and politically. The pressure is developing already. The Saudis are the ones who pushed for the ceasefire, and the Syrians put on the pressure to accept the ceasefire. Internal to Lebanon, the traditional Muslim leadership started an anti-Palestinian chorus, joining with the Lebanese rightists. I think the Palestinians have bettered their long-range chances, but the immediate situation is very rocky. It could turn against them in the short-range.

*On March 21, 1968, the Palestinian resistance had its first major military confrontation with Israeli forces at the town of Karameh in Jordan.

The new stage in the protracted Middle East conflict created by Sadat's trip to Jerusalem has had a serious effect on the uneasy situation in Lebanon. Recent clashes between the Syrian peace-keeping forces and Lebanese rightists supported by the army confirm the virtually complete polarization of forces in that country. The Lebanese Army, supposedly a neutral force, has now identified itself fully with the rightist factions. The rightists have undertaken an extensive rearmament program in recent months, preparing for the opportune time to reassert their control over the entire country.

The February 8 battle in Beirut in which fifty people, mostly Syrians, died was set off by rightists determined to

prevent the establishment of a peace-keeping force checkpoint in their neighborhood. Although Beirut remains a potential battleground, the real target for the rightists is South Lebanon. This region is vital to the continued existence of the Palestinian Liberation Organization as an organized military force, and it provides the backbone of popular support for the leftist and progressive forces of the Lebanese National Movement (LNM). Lebanese rightists (Christian and Muslim), the Israelis, and the reactionary Arab regimes would all stand to gain from the elimination of the PLO, a major radicalizing force in the region, and the destruction of the Lebanese left, one of the most developed progressive movements in the Arab world.

SOUTH LEBANON

PRELUDE TO OCCUPATION

KEN WHITTINGHAM



Lebanese-Palestinian Joint Forces in the South

WHO CONTROLS THE SOUTH?

The people of the south, for generations exploited and neglected by Lebanon's traditional leaders, have provided a solid base of popular support for the progressive forces in Lebanon. They have suffered greatly, but they have not submitted passively to their fate. The civil war was sparked by a fisherman's strike in Saida in February 1975, protesting the monopolization of fishing rights by the Protein Company, owned in part by rightist leader and former president Camille Chamoun. Security forces attacked a workers' demonstration, killing a local leader and former member of parliament, Maarouf Sa'ad. This crisis revealed growing popular and militant dissatisfaction with the government and the traditional leadership. The rightist forces responded to this threat with an attack on Palestinians in April which launched the full-scale civil war.

In the aftermath of the war the Lebanese National Movement found itself in control of most of the southern region of Lebanon. The Syrian forces and the official Lebanese Army, in so far as it existed at all, would not venture beyond the Litani River—the "red line" declared by the Israelis. The Lebanese government, under President Elias Sarkis, washed its hands of the south, acquiescing in Israeli efforts to isolate the south from the situation in the remainder of Lebanon.

The LNM, insufficiently organized and without adequate financial resources, found itself the unwilling administrator of the region, obliged to fill the vacuum created by the withdrawal of government services.

The structure created by the LNM in the southern-most port of Tyre gives an idea of the new administration. A political council deals with the basic administrative problems of the town and twenty surrounding villages. The council has sixteen members—eight representing political parties, and eight locally respected independents of no political affiliation. The council meets weekly to discuss problems and coordinate social services. These include policing the area. The official police are still present in the town and paid by the central government, but they do not cooperate in any way with the new council. Hospitals and schools are also serious problems, since Tyre has been flooded with refugees escaping Israeli and rightist attacks in the border region.

The problems of providing health services illustrate the difficulties facing the LNM and the hardships created by the central government's decision to ignore the south. Hospital facilities have always been limited and inadequate in this region. A year ago the main hospital for the south, in Saida, was only able to function as a dispensary. According to one of the doctors, the central government in Beirut withdrew beds from the hospital and instructed the medical staff to

cease working or lose their salaries, creating a potentially disastrous situation. Many of the staff continued to work without salaries. The Lebanese Red Crescent, controlled by the government, offered no assistance, but the International Red Cross stepped in to provide some essential equipment and medical supplies. The LNM contributes some \$18,000 per month and the hospital now provides 24-hour service, treats about 200 out-patients a day, and performs 80 operations a month.

But the medical problems are not all solved. With widespread malnutrition and other problems created by the bad living conditions of refugees, good health services are vital to prevent epidemics. When cholera recently struck the Middle East, Tyre suffered only four cases and no deaths. But, as one doctor explained, Tyre is always subject to Israeli bombing attacks and its hospital could be destroyed at any time. It is important that facilities be constructed underground, but it is doubtful that sufficient funds can be made available.

It is often said that the Palestinian armed organizations are in control of the south. In fact, the Palestinians are only responsible for what takes place inside their own camps. In matters of general administration there is coordination between the LNM and the Palestinian command council. This is especially true, and vitally so, at the military level. With the Lebanese and Syrian armies refusing to step south of the Litani River, only the Palestinian-Lebanese Unified Forces prevent Israel from exercising complete control over much of the south under the cover of the right-wing forces of the Lebanese Front. Thus on the Lebanese-Israeli border, both Palestinians and Lebanese, working separately but in close coordination, maintain a constant defense line. The region is not yet the depopulated zone dreamed of by the Israelis; many villagers have refused to leave their homes, only too conscious of the fact that just a few miles farther south people who left in 1948 have never been able to return.

A visit to the frontline positions of the Nationalist Movement quickly explodes the myth that these forces are divided along sectarian lines. The LNM's forces include Christians and Sunni and Shia Muslims fighting side by side against the right-wing Lebanese Front and the Israelis. One patrol leader, a Christian member of the Organization of Communist Action, explained that a major attempt to destroy both the Palestinian and leftist forces was expected in the coming months. When the attack comes, the Unified Forces will face the superior fire-power of the Israelis, for the right-wing militia are no threat without the backing of the Israeli military.

ISRAEL AND SOUTH LEBANON

The Israeli authorities maintain that their military operations in South Lebanon are in retaliation for Palestinian attacks on Israeli territory; that armed Palestinian units in the region represent a security threat to the Israeli state. Yet it is Israel which prevents the Lebanese Army and the Arab peace-keeping forces from controlling the situation in the South. The extent of Israeli government involvement in maintaining the situation of conflict in this area became clear towards the end of last year.

In November, the LNM leadership called on President Sarkis to convene a conference to discuss national reconciliation between the progressive forces and the right-wing alliance known as the Lebanese Front. According to LNM leaders,

they offered a balanced withdrawal of arms (not personnel, since their fighters are mostly residents of the south), including Palestinian arms, on condition that the official Lebanese Army take full responsibility for the whole of the south, including the border areas controlled by Lebanese Front commander Major Saadi Haddad. They also demanded that the "Good Fence" on the Israeli border be closed. The gates through this fence are the only access to the outside world for the inhabitants of the Christian villages under Haddad's control. Haddad has kept them isolated from any contact with the surrounding Muslim population* and made them totally dependent on Israel for trade and social services. Thus, Israeli Prime Minister Begin could tell a group of US Christians that "The Christians in the south of Lebanon are able to go on living thanks to Israeli support."

The Lebanese Front rejected reconciliation talks until the situation in the South had been solved. The LNM agreed to put the south at the top of the agenda for discussion, but no talks took place. According to informed sources, the Israeli authorities refused to allow Lebanese Army troops on the frontier, and declared that Saadi Haddad's forces were there to stay.

Israeli ambitions in South Lebanon are no great mystery. They want to divide the Palestinians and the local population. Following the Riyadh agreement which brought an end to the civil war in 1976, the PLO was obliged to withdraw its forces from the Ayn Tourah district and the mountains and head south. Since the Lebanese government takes no responsibility for the south, the Israelis can strike unhindered at the Palestinian forces there. Attacks on the indigenous Lebanese population, which raise little protest on the international level, are designed to turn the local population against the Palestinians. If the Palestinians are seen as the cause for the destruction, so much the better, not only for Israelis, but also for the Lebanese rightists.

Terrorization and harassment of the local population also serves a more immediate Israeli aim. When lives and livelihoods are threatened people are tempted to leave their homes and seek security and the means of survival elsewhere. Already some 300,000 are estimated to have left South Lebanon and headed for Beirut. If the Israelis succeed in depopulating the area south of the Litani River, then they can claim the existence of a no-mans land—a convenient buffer zone of the kind they have south in the Golan Heights and Sinai. Such a buffer zone in Lebanon is particularly significant since much of Israel's industrial plant is situated in the north around Haifa, and is vulnerable to attack from Lebanon in case of war.

The Israeli government has a plan, developed many years ago, to supplement the waters of the Jordan River by diverting the Litani River southwards from Marjayoun. This additional water supply to Israel is vital to the successful implementation of the settlement plan favored by Agriculture Minister Ariel Sharon. Israel would like to push its military settlements well into Lebanese territory, or alternatively, make use of the existing Christian villages near the border which are already effectively under Israeli control.

Speculation as to the aims of Israeli strategy in South Lebanon is supported by what Israeli forces have actually done on the ground. There can be little doubt that the kind of operations implemented even in the last few months, when the

* According to villagers, who at some point have lived under Haddad's control, he forbids civilians to leave the villages knowing that the Unified Forces will avoid shelling civilian population concentrations. —Eds.

Israeli Views

Defense Minister Ezer Weizman

Q: Since you have mentioned the question of solution or settlement—what kind of a settlement is Israel aiming at in southern Lebanon or in all of Lebanon before it removes its army?

Weizman: We greatly desire reaching a solution such as we have with Jordan. Let us remember though what happened in Jordan 8, 10 years ago, immediately after the 6-day war when Jordan was the headquarters of Fatah and Beirut was a happy and joyful city in the eastern Mediterranean prior to its destruction by Fatah. We, through pressure on the Jordanian Government, brought about Jordan's participation in the liquidation of Fatah. Not only by Jordan, because we also liquidated Fatah. Today we have a certain unwritten settlement with the Jordanian Government. The problem is that there is no government that can do the same in Lebanon If the Arab world indeed wants us not to sit in Lebanon—then the Arab world and other elements should bring this matter under control, just as Jordan did at the time.

Interview by Jerusalem Domestic Television Service, March 17, 1978

Chief of Staff Lt. General Mordekai Gur

Q: News agencies have reported that the IDF also operated north of Tyre. They also reported that women and children were hit in ambushes set up for vehicles. What do you have to say about this?

Gur: First, it is true that we did operate north of the Litani River. It should be remembered that Tyre—a name that is impressive in itself—lies north of the Litani. Tyre is surrounded by five refugee camps, which are the center of terrorist activity for the whole of Lebanon. We have operated against these camps in the past I wish that the Lebanese people and government and perhaps also the Syrians who are present in Lebanon as an inter-Arab deterrent force, would learn the lesson that Jordan, Syria and Egypt learned several years ago—simply to prevent the terrorists from operating

Q: Do you see the possibility of us being forced to extend our area of control in southern Lebanon because of activities by the terrorists?

Gur: War is a game of forces. We have set for ourselves certain perimeters—we mean the State of Israel—we very much want to maintain them. But if, for example, artillery and katyusha fire continue against our settlements and if the resistance which is manifested by shooting does not stop, we will not restrain ourselves. When I was asked two or three years ago whether there would be a red line for the advance of the Syrians, I replied that I do not like a red line at all. If I do not like a red line for the Syrians, I definitely do not like a red line for the Israelis.

Zevi Shapira interview on IDF Radio, March 18, 1978

Gur: I must remind you now that, as a result of terrorist activity in the Jordan Valley, the entire Jordan Valley was emptied of inhabitants. Our people did not evacuate, but they held on for two and a half years, three years, under endless shellings and shooting and ambushes. This means that the question of suffering applies to both sides. The power of resistance of our inhabitants was stronger. When it came to the test we took into account the historic accumulation of our population's suffering and we had to decide whether the time had come to change that base of the terrorists and hit it or not. I do not think that there was any justification for having dozens more victims fall on Israel's side after a week of blood such as we already had or after all the first suffering of the people of the State of Israel. Somewhere there is a meeting of justice faced with justice and I have not a shadow of a doubt that this operation was based on national and human historic justice.

I regret very much the fact that civilians were hit on

I have personally taken part in campaigns of various types. It is not often that we have a campaign which changes a situation. For the moment, if you ask me, I have the feeling that the situation has, after all, changed. I mentioned that the justification for the Arab victims who fell both in this campaign and in others is that through this process the State of Israel becomes stronger, firmer

Amiram Nir interview on Jerusalem Domestic Service, March 24, 1978

Agriculture Minister Ariel Sharon

Sharon: Each border has its own problems and its own solutions. . . . In the Arava . . . we waited for the terrorists in the hills, on cliffs, on the slopes, on the trails . . . We hit them and killed them. In 1970, within no more than a few months we killed there 70 terrorists.

Q: And insofar as southern Lebanon is concerned, does it imply the casualties among the local population?

Sharon: I wouldn't touch the population. But there will be areas where the population will leave by itself. We must make it perfectly clear to the Lebanese that the present situation is unbearable. We shouldn't leave a strip of charred land. We shouldn't touch the population. We should exercise control.

Q: On Lebanese territory?

Sharon: Yes, yes. On Lebanese territory. In the entire area south of the Litani river. To establish observation posts and reconnaissance missions, and inspections. Whoever goes on a mission against us will have much longer distances to traverse. Lebanon does not have a real army, so that we can warn them and explain exactly what we want. Maybe normal life will go on in southern Lebanon, but I would put barriers on the Litani. You have to have incursions, patrols, to keep our forces deep inside.

* Excerpts from a 1974 interview with Eitan Haber, in Yediot Ahronot, reprinted in Begin And Co. As They Really Are, an anthology edited by Israel Shahak.

Continued on p. 26

Sadat initiative was getting under way, are not merely a matter of defense against the threat of Palestinian insurgency or attack. Last November, Israeli planes raided a tiny village south of Tyre, twenty kilometers north of the border. Izziyeh had a population of less than five hundred, mostly agricultural workers employed on the adjacent orange groves owned, like most of the village, by the conservative Muslim leader Saeb Salaam. After one and a half hours of bombing, Izziyeh ceased to exist. Every building was razed to the ground, and for good measure, according to eye witnesses from the next village, the planes swooped in on the fleeing population and bombed them too. Miraculously, only twenty-seven people were killed and over a hundred injured. The low casualty figures were largely because most men were at work in the fields at the time of the raid. Women and children took the brunt of the attack. The raid was carried out with such precision that there is little evidence of any damage to Saeb Salaam's orange groves—it was clearly aimed at terrorizing civilians rather than destroying economic targets.

After the raid on Izziyeh, Israel attacked Burj al-Shemali, the Palestinian refugee camp on the outskirts of Tyre. Here again the raid was carried out with great precision: a cluster of houses away from the main part of the camp, inhabited by school teachers, was flattened. The location had no conceivable military value or purpose.

Fishermen in Tyre have their own stories to tell. Every night Israeli gunboats cruise within visible range of the port of Tyre making night fishing, the usual practice, very hazardous. Even by day it is now impossible to sail more than six kilometers to the south. Israeli gunboats prevent fishermen from reaching the richest fishing grounds. Several fishermen have been killed when their boats came under Israeli fire.

In border villages where tobacco is an important cash crop many farmers are not planting this year. The process of growing and curing tobacco takes fourteen months, so farmers are hesitant to invest their meagre resources when they do not know from day to day whether their families, fields or houses will be attacked. Even on Christmas day, while Prime Minister Begin was in Cairo supposedly furthering talks towards peace, Israeli soldiers crossed the border to kidnap another victim. On that occasion they were frustrated by a local militia patrol and ran away with at least one of their number badly wounded. But these kinds of incidents are a daily reality for the people in the border region.

THE LEBANESE FRONT

The Lebanese Front is a loose alliance of right-wing Maronite-led organizations. As a front it is even less cohesive than the Nationalist Movement. Little love is lost between Phalangist head Pierre Gemayel and National Liberal Party head Camille Chamoun. Although Chamoun is the titular head of the Lebanese Front, the Phalange (or *Kataeb*) is larger and has dominated the political strategy of the Front.

Ever since the civil war erupted in 1975, the rightists have been brandishing the threat of partition of Lebanon—the creation of an exclusive Maronite state in northern Lebanon. This partition has occurred, unofficially, on many levels: there is a massive gulf between the standard of living of this predominantly Christian zone and the rest of Lebanon. The Christian zone has its own administrative structure, including basic services such as mail and communications, which functioned well



Civilian casualties and destruction in Lebanese village of Izziyeh.



throughout the war. Even an airport has been constructed near the town of Jounieh, the rightists' headquarters. To cut ties with the rest of the country and the central government and its agencies would not present a massive problem. But in reality, the concept of partition was considered seriously only when the rightists were losing the civil war, prior to the Syrian intervention.

Although there is some disagreement between Gemayel and Chamoun on the question of partition, the predominant position opposes it for the following reasons. The establishment of an exclusive Maronite state in the north would almost inevitably mean leaving more than half of the state, once entirely dominated by the Maronites, in the hands of the progressive forces. At a strategic level, the small Maronite state would feel threatened in the same way as the Israeli state feels threatened by the creation of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza. Moreover, Maronite entrepreneurs would be deprived of an easily exploited hinterland rich in cultivable land and cheap labor. There is no evidence that the Maronite leadership has any desire to give up what it sees as its right to



Pierre Gemayel inspects *Kataeb* fighters. Israeli ships patrol the coast; Israeli tank at the "good fence."



control the whole of Lebanon. If it were willing to cede power on a just and equitable basis to the Muslim community which forms the majority of the population, then many of the underlying causes of the civil war would cease to exist. The bitter fighting which paralyzed the country and devastated the economy was not continued with the aim of creating a separatist state—this was merely a defensive tactic at a certain stage of the struggle. There is no doubt that the rightist leadership still harbors the ambition of controlling all of Lebanon, and reasserting its former position as the commercial center of the Arab world—the position which gave the Maronite community its strength and wealth.

While the Lebanese Front is not willing to cede territory to the progressive forces, it is also unwilling to cede Lebanese

land to Israel. Despite the almost total dependence on Israel of the rightist militias in the southern enclave of Marjayoun, their leaders in Jounieh and East Beirut seek to deny any alliance with Israel, and have even denied any connection with the southern-based militia. The Front's link with the Israelis poses a threat to the Maronite leaders' entrepreneurial aspirations in the Arab world.

The current and abiding preoccupation of the Lebanese Front is to eradicate the presence of the Palestine Liberation Organization and its armed units in Lebanon. The refugee camps around Beirut represent a permanent threat to Maronite control in Lebanon, since the PLO provides both moral and material support to the progressive forces and remains a central focus for revolutionary activity throughout the Arab world. Without Palestinian backing, the progressive forces could not have withstood the militarily superior rightist forces in the civil war. In the south the situation is similar. Without the presence of the Palestinians, the traditional Muslim leaders—who are rapidly moving towards a position of support for the Front—would be in a stronger position to regain the influence they lost during the war.

THE PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE

For the Palestinian resistance what takes place in Lebanon, and particularly in the south, is of crucial significance. By the provisions of the 1969 Cairo Accord (included in the Riyadh agreement which ended the war in 1976), the Palestinian resistance has the right to maintain a presence in South Lebanon in order to continue insurgency operations against Israel. But this 1969 Arab agreement also specified that there would be no armed Palestinian presence in the rest of Lebanon.

Over a period of less than ten years, the armed organizations of the PLO, which form the backbone of the resistance, have faced massacres in Jordan and lost their bases there, have been restricted from action across the Syrian border and have met considerable harassment from the Assad regime. And in Lebanon they have come under heavy attack from Lebanese rightists, Syrian interventionary forces, and Israeli raids in the south. In addition, the PLO has lost some of the political status and force carefully developed after the 1973 war. Yasser Arafat's speech to the United Nations General Assembly in 1974 signified strong international support for the Palestinian revolution. This, coupled with the Rabat summit conference the same year, confirming the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, seemed to ensure that no party to the Middle East conflict could possibly trade away or ignore the Palestinians' right to self-determination and repatriation.

But Sadat has done exactly that. The main obstacle to convening the Geneva conference was the question of Palestinian representation; Sadat therefore sidestepped Geneva. He has declared Arafat unfit to represent the Palestinians because he sat down in Tripoli with "hirelings and murderers." In the present political squeeze, Palestinian unity and the continued existence of the PLO's armed units are crucial. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the largest of the rejection-front organizations, is staying firmly within the framework of the PLO. But militarily the struggle against Israel requires a firm base, and in South Lebanon, its last resort among the confrontation states, the PLO's armed units are under increasing pressure from Christian rightists, conservative Muslim leaders, and from the Israelis.

INTERVIEWS

GERARD CHALIAND ON

Eritrea



Eritrean fighters/peasants

The following is a composite of two MERIP interviews with Gerard Chaliand, one in October 1977, and then in early March 1978. Chaliand has long followed Third World national liberation movements and is internationally recognized for his articles and books on Palestine, Guinea Bissau, Algeria, Vietnam and Latin America. He was in Eritrea in the spring of 1977.

Q: First, what are your general impressions of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF)?

A: I crossed into Eritrea from Sudan and spent about three weeks with the EPLF, travelling in a large area from the Sudanese border to the outskirts of Asmara. I was very impressed by the ideological quality and homogeneity of the EPLF, and by the number of women involved. Women are about a third of the movement; they are well-organized and have a lot of important responsibilities. It's the first time I have seen a movement in Africa with so many women members.

I was struck also by the large workshops in Sahel and

Hamasi provinces. These workshops repair trucks, electronic equipment, transistor radios and watches, sew uniforms, make all sorts of arms and do general metallurgy. There are also workshops to train people in technology. The EPLF is trying to be self-sufficient.

Overall, I can only compare the EPLF with the movement in Guinea Bissau, which was the best-organized movement I have seen in Africa. After the Vietnamese, the EPLF is probably the most impressive group I've seen. If they are not liquidated in the coming few years, they will be known as one of the outstanding national liberation movements of the last thirty years.

Q: How does the EPLF relate to the local population?

A: The EPLF's relations with the population—which is about half Muslim and half Christian—were very good as far as I could judge. The EPLF was started by Tigrinya-speaking Christian intellectuals, but they have made a fantastic effort to

build a national party. They welcome anyone who wants to join the fight for social justice and liberation. Both Muslims and Christians join; there is no religious discrimination. In fact, the movement is quite secular—if you want to pray, you pray; if you don't, that's fine too. National integration is very important. The EPLF speaks Tigrinya, the language of the Christians, also Tigray, the language of most of the Muslims, as well as the languages of minorities such as Saho and Bilen. People are encouraged to teach each other the dances of the different ethnic areas.

The EPLF has won over the population by bringing benefits and not taking things away. They set up "people's stores" similar to those in Guinea Bissau. The movement buys staple goods like sugar, oil, rice and textiles in Sudan, brings them in trucks across the border and sells them to the population at a standard low price. Every villager or head of family has a paper recording the name and number of people in the family, which permits purchases of a set amount from the store.

In the villages, the EPLF has formed militias. It has begun agrarian reforms—but only where needed, not everywhere. The big estates of the Italians and others are in the hands of the EPLF. About five hundred guerrillas work in agriculture, producing for the fighters and helping to build up a surplus for the population in case of shortages, such as from a drought.

The EPLF has created schools in every liberated village. There are three kinds of schools: one for beginners, one for adults, and one for those who are most advanced. The schools are for both men and women, girls and boys. The EPLF also provides medical care for people and cattle. The nomads and semi-nomads have been won over largely because their cattle were vaccinated. The EPLF has also helped to resettle refugees.

Q: Could you tell us something about the EPLF's rival, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF)?

A: The lowland of Barka, in the west of the country, is entirely under the ELF's control. This is traditionally a Muslim, Tigray-speaking area. The ELF has adopted Arabic as an official language, although Arabic is probably spoken by less than two percent of Eritreans. There are traditional ties between the ELF's Muslim leadership and neighboring countries, such as Sudan. Economic and military aid from Iraq and Saudi Arabia goes to different factions of the ELF.

I have been told about the ELF by people who have visited their areas and also by ELF cadre in Rome and Khartoum. It seems they do not have a very strong or direct influence over the population; their relationship is essentially through local notables. They don't try to make any kind of social change and don't deal with class problems. They appeal to nationalism and sometimes to Muslim solidarity, but they do have Christian members and do not want to be called an ethnic or religious movement.

Q: You mentioned that the ELF relies on local notables. What has happened to the notables in the areas under EPLF control?

A: The EPLF holds yearly elections in the villages for leadership positions. Most of the conservative notables have not been elected.

Q: Could you give us more details about the military situation in Eritrea?

A: Apart from the control of Barka, there are ELF units in Seraye and Denkalia provinces. The EPLF controls most of the rest of the country. The EPLF took Nakfa, capital of Sahel, in March 1977, about ten days before we were there. Then it took the city of Afabet. After we left, in May-July, the EPLF took the important town of Decamere, then Keren, the strategic stronghold of Eritrea. Whoever controls Keren controls the highlands, the way to the Red Sea, Sahel and from there Barka.

Militarily the EPLF has had better results than the ELF, although the ELF was stronger and more numerous three years ago. The ELF has taken the capital of Barka, Agordat and another town, Tenesseiat, near the Sudanese border. The majority of the territory, however, has been liberated by the EPLF. Since December 1977, the EPLF has been fighting for control of the port city of Massawa and it now controls all the road from Massawa to Asmara.

Q: What prospects do you see for unity between the two fronts?

A: On the field, the ELF is pushing for unity, hoping to control the EPLF as much as possible. The EPLF says it does not want an immediate merger, but a united front where it can keep its autonomy. This is a big difference. I don't think there could be more than military unity on a short-term basis at this time. As far as I could judge, the rivalry between the two movements is deep, and the closer the prospect of independence, the more that rivalry will increase. The EPLF has very little external support, while the ELF is supported by Iraq and Saudi Arabia—rich countries that want to control the area. The Saudis want an independent Eritrea controlled by the ELF so that the Red Sea would become an "Arab lake" as they say. My impression is that the rivalry cannot be settled through unity or through negotiation, so there will probably be a clash between the ELF and the EPLF one day.

Q: What is the relative strength of the two groups?

A: Judging by military activity, the EPLF is by far the stronger. The number of fighters, as reported by observers in January 1977, was around 12-15,000 for the EPLF and around 10-12,000 for the ELF. Now, in the spring of 1978, the ELF is estimated at about 12,000 and the EPLF at about 20,000.

Q: What about political leadership of the population?

A: Aside from the towns, I would say that leadership of the population is probably 100 percent ELF in Barka and 100 percent EPLF in Sahel. In the highlands, where more than half of the population lives, the EPLF has by far the greatest influence. It is hard to give definite figures, of course.

Q: There are reports of a third front led by Osman Sabbe, the expelled foreign minister of the EPLF.

A: Yes, Sabbe recently created a third front. Sabbe invited observers, including a few of my French friends, to a congress inside the liberated territories in February 1977. They told me that they went a few kilometers on the other side of the border, but that he had only 1000 to 1500 men and little influence over the population. In fact, since the ELF-EPLF agreement of November 1977, the Sabbe group has not been active.

Q: Can you comment on the relative strength of the Baathists within the ELF?

A: I don't know at first hand, but I've been told that they are in the military and political leadership. They may not be numerous, but they are powerful.

Q: What kind of aid does the ELF receive, and from what countries?

A: The ELF's two main sources of aid are Saudi Arabia and Iraq. They compete. The Iraqis give aid to the Baathists inside the ELF to make that faction stronger. The Saudis support the other, more conservative faction.

Q: What about aid to the EPLF?

A: The EPLF is a lot poorer than the ELF. Up to 1977, the EPLF had help first from People's Yemen and then some help from Somalia. At times they also have received help from Syria which wanted to counter Iraq's influence. Recently, People's Yemen has supported the Ethiopian government, following the Soviet Union.

Q: If an independent Eritrea comes closer to reality, you said there would be a clash between the EPLF and the ELF. Can you weigh the political, economic and military factors that would influence the outcome of such a clash?

A: Very probably there would be external involvement. I don't know how. But, for example, Sudan, an ally of Saudi Arabia, could close its frontiers to the EPLF.

Q: What is the EPLF's relationship to Sudan, and given the Sudanese alignment with Saudi Arabia, what is its future?

A: Officially, Sudan allows both groups free movement across the border. This certainly gives both an opportunity to strengthen themselves. But if Sudan stops the access of one group—and it would be the EPLF—it would make things very difficult. These prospects will depend finally on Arab politics.

Q: What is the nature of the Ethiopian regime?

A: The Derg must be given credit for two important reforms necessary for the modernization of Ethiopia: land reform and more social justice. While the Muslim Oromos make up 40 percent of the population, the Christian Amharas, composing only 35 percent of the population, had traditionally dominated. The Derg ordered land redistribution in the southern provinces to benefit the Oromos. The Derg also deposed the old, mostly Amhara, ruling class and gave greater status and rights to those who had hitherto been excluded from power. These changes, along with the suppression of political and ethnic opposition, were accompanied by extreme brutality and bloodshed.

In many other respects, the Derg has made serious mistakes. It has silenced most of the politically aware people in the country. Urban workers have been alienated by the arrest of labor union leaders. Political goals have taken a back seat to military ones: most of the peasants recently given land in the south were drafted into the peasant army, and most in

the north have been angered by the Derg's land policy.

To the right of the regime is the extremely conservative Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU), composed of landowners and ex-Haile Selassie supporters. It is strong in the north—in Tigray and Godjam. To the left of the regime is the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP). It is essentially a student movement with an urban base among trade unionists and some following in rural areas. The government struck against both these groups in February-April 1977, causing bloodbaths in the towns. During this time the regime had critical support from the Meison, a group of Marxist intellectuals, many of whom were serving as advisors. In February, the Meison had high hopes for a radicalization of the regime, but only a few months later, in September, this group was banned.

The future of Ethiopia as a whole depends on the stability of this government and I doubt it will remain stable. Any military defeat will increase the prospects for an internal coup. If there is a coup, there is a good chance it would be from the right, in the name of "national unity."

Q: Could you elaborate somewhat on the opposition within Ethiopia? How strong are these forces and what are their chances for success?

A: The EPRP emerged from the student left, and some of its members are pro-Chinese. Most have been to US, British or French universities: they are predominantly Amhara which, as the ruling class, sent its children to school. The EPRP has been essentially an urban movement but it did make efforts to mobilize peasants in 1977. Their knowledge of local customs is not very great. Although one should not underestimate the strength of the EPRP in the cities, they don't seem to me to be strong enough to take power.

The other opposition movements are localized and have no national scope. The Meison was essentially an urban intellectual movement, the Afar and Oromo movements are ethnic. The Tigray movement is Marxist-Leninist from what I've read of their pamphlets and heard through the EPLF. They are said to control a lot of rural area, although I have not seen it myself.

The future of the Ethiopian left is not good in the short run. Power will probably shift to those who think in terms of state and national power and not social revolution.

Q: How would you characterize the differences between the Derg and Meison that led to their split?

A: The Meison were intellectuals with some knowledge of what reforms were necessary and who wanted the government to move to the left. The Derg was from a middle-class military background, strongly nationalist, with no clear direction or idea of how to end the corruption of the former regime.

Q: What is the extent of the government's administrative, political and military control over the country?

A: I don't know. No journalists, scholars or outsiders are allowed to travel to the countryside where there is unrest. Only the military goes there. Since ten of the fourteen provinces are insecure, that means control from Addis is not good. In Shoa, government influence and reforms seem to

POLITICAL REPRESSION IN EGYPT

JANET STEVENS

The Western media's portrayal of popular Egyptian support for the Sadat "peace initiative" must be examined in the light of the current climate for dissent within that country. Janet Stevens provides detailed information on political repression and censorship which exposes Sadat's heralded "political liberalization." We wish to thank Janet Stevens for bringing to our attention and keeping us informed about the case of Ahmed Fuad Negm (see MERIP Reports nos. 64 and 65 for statements by Negm). —Eds.

Over 4,000 Egyptians were arrested in 1977 by the Egyptian State Security police, responsible for making political arrests. But only 36 State Security cases were actually brought to court in 1977. Certain features of the Egyptian judiciary system account for the disparity between these two figures. First, most were mass arrests, coming at the time of the spontaneous uprising of January 18-19, or in the wake of Sadat's November peace initiative and visit to Jerusalem. In both instances, many individuals were arrested together and accused in the same case. Secondly, some of those detained were later released without charges due to the lack of evidence against them. Thirdly, and most importantly, the discrepancy

must be understood in the context of Egyptian laws which give the District Attorney's Office for State Security cases the power to imprison any citizen for up to six months without any formal investigation or accusation. Other laws permit imprisonment for up to one year pending trial. At the end of that year, if the case has still not been presented in court, imprisonment may be "renewed" or extended up to a period of five years. This means that many political prisoners are now at "in between" stages: in detention awaiting interrogation; in prison waiting for definite charges to be brought against them; or, if charges have been brought, waiting for their cases to come before the court at some future time. The State Security police and District Attorney officials use these "in between" stages to intimidate political prisoners, especially when they lack evidence that would stand up in court.

Keeping in mind the fact that many political prisoners have not had their day in court, we can look at some of the more representative of the 36 political cases. Egyptian leftists were involved in 33 of the cases (three of which were put under military jurisdiction); the remaining three cases dealt with the religious organizations *al-Jihad* and *Takfir wa Higra*, whose members were accused of bombings and the assassination of Sheikh Dhahabi, a former Minister of Awqaf.

THE CASES

After the January 1977 uprising, the State Security police apprehended more than 2,000 Egyptian citizens on charges of demonstrating, inciting riots, or membership in secret organizations.

Cases No. 100 and 101. In cases 100 and 101, 450 people were charged, approximately 191 of whom have been brought to court so far. Of these 191, 184 were released from prison but still have to return to court to face the charges: 82 are accused of membership in the Egyptian Communist Party, 38 are accused of membership in the Egyptian Workers' Communist Party, three are accused of links with secret organizations, and 61 are accused of inciting to riot. The remaining seven of the 191 are still in prison. Five are accused of membership in one of the Communist parties: two women, Bea Najjara and Magda 'Adli, and two men, Mustafa al-Khuli and Abdel Hakim Taymur al-Malwani are students; one man, Aryan Naseef, is a government inspector. The remaining two in prison, accused in case 101, are Iman Attiyeh, a student, and Hamza Mustafa al-Idda, a civil servant.

A person can be prosecuted in these cases solely on a secret police agent's claim to have witnessed her/him leading a demonstration. Such was the case of Qutb Hamza Qutb, who was "seen" leading a demonstration despite the sworn testi-

mony of hospital officials that Qutb was in a recovery room at the time of the demonstration.

Others involved in cases 100 and 101, still in prison and yet to be brought to court, are mainly workers and students, but also five army recruits, four journalists, two doctors, six lawyers, 20 intellectuals (including four poets and a writer), and a professor. Undaunted by lack of evidence, the Egyptian government has intervened actively to influence verdicts in these cases. President Sadat personally issued 162 objections to court rulings (up to the end of December 1977), and only 11 prisoners were released without some presidential objection on their cases.

Cases of sabotage. The other 1550 Egyptians were arrested on charges of demonstrating and sabotage. The accused were from many different governorates of Egypt, including Aswan, Qana, al-Minia, Cairo, Alexandria, Damahur al-Mansura, Suez, Port Said, and Giza. All of these cases were presented in court, but only about a dozen of the accused were convicted of sabotage, most of whom were known to have criminal records. Only four of the convicted were politically involved in any way, and they were ultimately convicted of demonstrating, after the sabotage charges were dropped.

It is not unusual in such cases for arrests to be made for purely political reasons. This is clear in the case of Fatah Allah Khafagi (an engineer and member of the legal opposition *Tajamm'a* Party, a coalition of leftists and liberal groups), who had been politically active in al-Minia. A security police inspector claimed in court that he saw Khafagi setting fire to a military kiosk in al-Minia on January 19, 1977. At the same time, Dr. Mustafa Khalil, the first Secretary of the Arab Socialist Union, testified that Khafagi was at the Cairo headquarters of the ASU Central Committee for a training session during January 18, 19 and 20. The District Attorney's office maintained its accusation, stating that Dr. Khalil's testimony had been written in the "passive" and not the "active" tense. Apparently, this argument was not strong enough to stand up in court, for Khafagi was declared innocent and released.

Case No. 300. On September 28, 1977, the State Security police presented a report to the Attorney General's office, which consequently ordered the arrest of 41 leftists (12 students, 16 workers, 11 intellectuals, a lawyer and a doctor). They were accused of membership in and formation of regional committees of either the Egyptian Communist Party (15), or the Egyptian Communist Workers' Party (26). The report stated that they were mobilizing to incite the masses against the government's intention to lift basic food subsidies, and that leaflets found in their possession criticized the government's policy and warned of the increasing burdens and rising cost of living the policy would bring to the toiling masses.

Before all the arrests had been made, Presidential Decree No. 19 changed the case from a civil to a military one. The Administrative court refused an appeal against the decree. After an official investigation, 21 of the 41 were released; another six were subsequently released by the military court for lack of evidence. Three others were released because they had previously been arrested in case 100, and could not stand accused in two cases at the same time. Eleven are still in prison at this time.

Cases related to the Sadat initiative. The most recent cases involve those who opposed Sadat's trip to Jerusalem. In case 385, Tawhid Abdel Hamid Annahadi was accused of expressing his pessimism about the possible outcome of Sadat's peace initiative. State Security cases 400, 404, 413, 491, 506, 526 and 617 involve more than 200 arrests of people accused of distributing leaflets against the peace initiative. In case 118, four other individuals, accused of distributing such leaflets, have been tortured. They have sent notes and telegrams to various government offices pleading for outside help; these pleas have not led to any action on their behalf.

TORTURE AND REPRESSION

Leftists are not the only ones to undergo torture. The State Security police have arrested more than 200 people charged with membership in extremist religious organizations; some have been convicted of kidnapping, bombings, or murder. Many of these prisoners have complained of torture, but their pleas have been ignored.

Although many of those who are tortured cannot make their complaints heard outside the prison walls, one group of 21 prisoners went on a hunger strike in November 1977. The 21, all accused in case 300, held their hunger strike for 15 days in protest against the bad conditions at Tora prison.*

Prison is not the only form of political repression. The legal authorities often use other administrative means to "punish" those who "misbehave," or those who cannot be convicted in court for lack of evidence. For example, Nabil Atris, an engineer, was imprisoned right after the January 1977 uprising. After five months in jail he was released without an investigative report ever having been issued. Two months later, in September, he was imprisoned again by the military authorities. He was again released after two months only to find that the Ministry of Interior had turned over his file to a local court which transferred him from his job in the construction cooperative at Suez to the governorate of Qana. Similarly, Ahmed Anis, a statistical worker in the Ministry of Social Affairs, was transferred to Sinai on the basis of a report from the Ministry of Interior. Another 23 politically active workers were also transferred from their jobs at the steel complex in Helwan.

University campuses are also a target of repression. In 1977, 87 students were expelled because of their political opinions. More than 350 candidates for student union elections were crossed off lists by State Security authorities. Six students at Cairo University were recently sent before a "corrections committee" because they had posted announcements for meetings or "wall newspapers" in the halls of the university.

Another method is indirect detention. Ismail Mahdi, a writer, recently sent a letter requesting help from the Committee for the Defense of Civil Rights, set up by the *Tajamm'a* Party. Six and a half years ago Mahdi was incarcerated in a mental hospital after being arrested and imprisoned by the State Security police.

Repression intensified in the wake of Sadat's Jerusalem visit. Voice of Palestine radio broadcasts were banned. Many Palestinians and students from the "Steadfastness Front" countries were expelled from Egypt. All foreign magazines that

* See *MERIP Reports* Nos. 64 and 65 for protest statements issued by the poet Ahmed Fuad Negm.

spoke critically of the Sadat visit were prohibited, most notably *al-Watan al-'Arabi* and *al-Iqtisad al-'Arabi*. Egyptians also felt the consequences of speaking out in public. For example, Sayyid Ahmed Shita was beaten and arrested after expressing his reservations about the Sadat initiative on a Cairo bus in December.

Despite censorship and threats of imprisonment, people are still managing to express their opinion. A play called "The Question Cannot Be Put In A Closet With Mothballs" is being performed privately among student and worker groups in Cairo. The play describes the problems that an Egyptian pro-

fessor faces from the authorities for teaching that King Abdullah of Jordan was assassinated because he was a traitor who wanted to make a deal with the Zionist enemy. The professor's defense is that he is teaching exactly what is written in the textbook issued by the Ministry of Education. The parallel to Sadat's trip to Israel is obvious.

World media lavishly covered Sadat's "dramatic" moves. But the daily "drama" of the majority of Egyptian people—one of repression and deprivation—is largely unknown. The cases described here are only a small part; most stories will never be told.

Negm on Trial

One of the most important cases dealing with freedom of expression in Egypt involves the popular poet Ahmed Fuad Negm, the blind singer and oud player Sheikh Imam Issa, the singer Ezza Balbaa, and four students from Ain Shams University, Magdi Abdel Fatah Farag, Muhammad Fathi Mahmoud, Amr Shawkat and Midhat Abdel-Jawad. They have been accused of various charges: insult to and defamation of the President of the Republic (based on the prosecution's interpretation of one of Negm's poems), provoking unrest through singing, entering the grounds of Ain Shams University "by force," and possession of illegally printed pamphlets.

These accusations are the result of a simple poetry reading and concert given by Sheikh Imam, Negm and Balbaa on November 15, 1977 at Ain Shams University. They were invited there through normal university-regulated procedures by an officially-recognized student club at the Faculty of Engineering. It is especially noteworthy that from the beginning, President Sadat showed "special interest" in the case, proclaiming Presidential Decree 523/1977—which changed the case from civil to military status. The accused were questioned or imprisoned within a week after the concert. Negm and some of the students were imprisoned for over a month and then released. Shortly after their release, they were summoned before the High Military Court. Their defense was presented in four court sittings, ending on March 7, 1978, in which Judge Ahmed Abdallah proclaimed that he would issue his decision in the next sitting, scheduled for March 18, 1978.

The military prosecutor, Sayyid Nasr, did not reply to any of the defense's challenges, choosing to base its case on the investigative report and ten witnesses which were brought before the court in the first session. Some of these witnesses' statements were contradictory, or so general as to have no relevance to the particulars of the case. One witness, a State Security policeman, said that some of the students had hit him when he tried to block the entry of Sheikh Imam and Balbaa. He couldn't seem to remember where they had hit him, at one point saying his leg, another time saying "all over." Prosecution witness Gamal Abu Dhikra said that this "bunch of accused" were known to be troublemakers opposed to the ruling government, and shouldn't be allowed on university grounds. He also claimed that they made wall newspapers opposing government policies, which should be the main factor in their prosecution.

Dr. Ahmed Shawqi, who teaches at Ain Shams, testified that Negm, Imam and Balbaa had come regularly to the university for the past four years and that they had never caused any disturbance. Shawqi also pointed out that the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Dr. Mastafa Al-Hashimi (a member of the ruling Masr Party), had tried to cancel the concert without due justification, and that this had created some unnecessary tension. Another professor testified that he had passed by the lecture hall in which the concert was taking place, and when he heard clapping, stepped in to listen out of curiosity. In answer to an inquiry from the judge, this professor said that the students at the concert were attentive and quiet, and in no way could the atmosphere be called provocative.

The main points brought out by defense lawyers Ahmed Nabil Hilali, Magdy Jebali, and Abdallah Zogby clarify why this case threatens not only the accused, but also the rights of freedom of expression and due process of law in Egypt. In court, Lawyer Hilali challenged outright the appropriateness of consideration of the case as a military matter, and advocated that this case could be a dangerous precedent, encouraging the President to violate the Constitution and the law without restraint:

For everyone who thumbs through the papers of this case, there strikes him at every phrase a confused, confusing question. Why is a military court dealing with this case? For the actions that were done by the accused do not even reach the level of behavioral infringements that fall under the jurisdiction of university disciplinary committees. Despite that fact, a behavioral infringement has become twisted into a military case that has made its way to military jurisdiction, and the defense has a right to ask why? . . . and how? . . . and to the interest of whom?

It has been noted that Article 7 of the Law of Military Jurisdiction permits the President of the Republic . . . when a State of Emergency is declared . . . to change any crimes to military jurisdiction.

Despite the fact that this is the text, this doesn't mean, in any case, that the President of the Republic has the right or free rein to invalidate ordinary criminal jurisdiction with the stroke of a pen, whereupon it becomes his right to put a crime under military jurisdiction . . . any crime . . . or every crime.

The President of the Republic has the right to change—according to Article 7 of the Law of Military Jurisdiction mentioned above—any crime to military

jurisdiction, as long as he follows the guidelines internationally agreed upon concerning the role of military courts and their duties.

For military jurisdiction is a very grave matter, and all of us should make sure that the gravity of its nature is preserved . . . for its function is protection of the security, safety and interests of the Armed Forces.

Where is the infringement of the security of the Armed Forces in this case? Where is the threat to its safety? Where is the violation of its interests?

Hilali challenged the constitutionality of the Presidential Decree changing the case to military status, arguing that the law allows him to change the status of *kinds of crimes in general* and *not particular cases* involving certain individuals at a certain time and place. He also argued that the law states that military courts try civilians in very exceptional cases, depending on the type of the crimes committed, and the charges for this case did not reflect the seriousness of crimes usually brought before military courts.

The defense went on to argue that the right of any citizen to criticize is a natural right, and that constructive criticism, no matter how bitter it may seem to the object of the criticism, is a necessary factor for social, cultural and political development. The defense pointed out that the criticism implied in Negm's poem "Important Declaration" was certainly not more invective than some of the local scandals that have recently been covered by Cairo newspapers (e.g., Boeing scandal, black market). Part of the charge against Negm for "insulting the President" included "imitation of the President's voice." Hilali pointed out that the State Security police or Attorney General's office could have "fixed up" some tapes, "like in the Watergate scandal," because they had them in their possession for quite a while. He argued that he didn't think that the President had a poetic rhythm like Negm, and that even if we supposed that Negm did imitate the President's voice, this is not a crime. Mimicry, in all civilized nations, is considered a form of art and not a crime.

The defense lawyers stressed the importance of this case in defining more precisely the dividing line between what is considered legal opposition to government policies (possessing a constructive critical spirit), and illegal opposition (advocating unwarranted violence or threatening the public welfare). The defense rested its case on March 7, 1978. The military judge, who had listened very patiently and thoughtfully to the defense decided that he would pronounce his decision on March 18, 1978. But military judges are known to have a great deal of pressure put on them from above. How much this judge will rest his decision strictly on the evidence of the case and his legal conscience—and not on other "interfering" factors—still remains to be seen.

EDITOR'S NOTE

On March 25, after a week's postponement, Judge Ahmed Abdallah announced his decision. Sheikh Imam, Ezza Balbaa and Amr Shawkat were found innocent. The judge found a "lack of speciality of the military court" to decide on the case of Midhat Abdel-Jawad. Muhammad Fathi Mahmoud was sentenced to three years in prison and a fine of LE 100, because he did not attend all court sittings and thus was considered to have "fled." Ahmed Fuad Negm was sentenced to one year in prison. Negm's lawyers think that Negm may not have to spend a year in prison, because he has already spent more than that amount of time in prison before being charged, and because *Negm has another court case coming up on April 15.*



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ERRATA

The following paragraph was accidentally omitted from the conclusion of "Assad's Balancing Act" by George Kanaan in *MERIP Reports* No. 65.

"With the Cairo-Jerusalem negotiations at a standstill, it may be slightly premature to speak of a bilateral settlement. One thing seems quite certain: regardless of whether or not the Sadat "initiative" bears fruit, the major obstacle at this stage to a Pax Americana lies in Lebanon. There, the Palestinian resistance movement and its Lebanese progressive allies are in their last stronghold, South Lebanon, struggling to hold ground against the persistent attacks of Lebanese rightist forces aided by the Israeli Army. Meanwhile, Syria sits frozen on the sidelines unable to move for fear of tangling with Israel. Although one can expect still heavier attacks on the Palestinian-progressive forces in the near future, it is their resistance which is obstructing the realization of a US-Israeli peace, and not the refusal of the Assad regime to accept a piecemeal settlement."

Joe Stork's review of Peter Sluglett's *Britain in Iraq* (*MERIP Reports* no. 63) stated "by 1932 there were less than 2000 secondary schools in the whole country." It should have read "2000 secondary school places in the whole country."

FILM REVIEW



Hyena's Sun (Soleil des Hyenes) direction and screenplay by Ridha Behi; Tunisian/Dutch co-production; 100 minutes; Arabic with English subtitles.

Sun and sea—natural resources of many underdeveloped countries. Every year just after Christmas European newspapers and television are filled with advertising extolling the virtues of holiday spots in Europe's backward capitalist periphery and the countries of North Africa. How many of those who go on package tours to these spots ever consider the effect of their tourism on the people left behind when the tourist season is over.

Ridha Behi's film goes behind the bromides of the commercials to analyze what happens to one village in North Africa when it is selected to become a tourist site. The village could be anywhere in North Africa; the director is Tunisian and the impetus for the film came from the Tunisian experience. It was actually filmed in the southern Moroccan village of Tifnite with the cooperation of the local fishermen. The final product apparently came as an unpleasant surprise for the Moroccan government.

The film opens with a woman dying in childbirth through loss of blood. There is no hospital in the village; to get to a hospital she would have to go by boat. But even before the villagers can get her to the boat she is dead. The implication is clear: the village needs basic medical services and a road to connect it to the nearest town. But this is not what the village is going to get.

One day the villagers are surprised by Europeans driving from the sea. They take a quick look around the village and then disappear. The villagers soon learn that their village has been chosen as the site of a new tourist complex. The bulldozers move in, the hotel is built, the tourists arrive and the villagers become a quaint tourist attraction to be filmed at prayer and in 'traditional' costume. Another triumph for economic development.

The film concentrates on the effect of the hotel construction on the villagers and the reactions of the different classes in the village. The traditional ruling class is repre-

sented by Haj Ibrahim, the village rich man. Just before the Europeans come to inspect the village he turns down a villager's offer to sell his land. The villager wants to use the money to buy a motor for his fishing boat. Ibrahim fears that if this villager obtains a motor he and others will set up a cooperative which would be a competitive threat to Ibrahim's fishing interests. Once he learns of the tourist complex he changes his mind and buys the land realizing its potential value. Ibrahim is the lynchpin for the Europeans—as one of them points out, while government ministers and officials can change, the village rich are permanent. He is cultivated by them and moves into a luxurious villa.

The reactions of the villagers are various. Some, represented by the militant Tahar, continue fishing. But most abandon fishing for more secure, less hazardous jobs constructing and working in the hotel. Even the village idiot is able to get a job guiding the camel which gives rides for tourists.

The villagers become marginalized by the hotel. At the opening ceremony they are kept behind a wire fence while the minister of tourism drones on about how he always likes the opportunity to get close to the people. What was once a productive village becomes nonproductive. As the village blacksmith Lamine remarks, when a fishing village starts buying tinned sardines, it has died. The one attempt at resistance is futile. After the women have been assaulted by a hotel guard for dirtying the beach by washing their clothes there, the remaining fishermen throw their fish onto the sand and refuse to supply the hotel. The next day Haj Ibrahim drives up to them on the beach and throws new fish on the sand, pointing out contemptuously that they are not the only fishermen in the country, and that the hotel will never be short of fish. The only result of the strike is that the militant, who was nowhere near the scene when the strike started, is thrown into prison on Ibrahim's instructions.

The total idiocy of tourism-as-development is encapsulated in an episode towards the end of the film. A commercial is being filmed about the hotel. The whole village is recruited for the ultimate in productive labor—they hold a rope which keeps a palm tree upright while two European models strike sexy poses. The European's contempt for the villagers is illustrated when the director decides there is too much light to continue filming. The film crew and models settle down for a nap in the sun while the villagers are left holding up the palm tree.

Ridha Behi offers no pat solutions. People living in a cold climate prefer to spend their holidays in a warm climate. Tourism is an easy way to earn foreign exchange. But as this film shows, an underdeveloped country that concentrates on tourism can easily destroy the potential for more productive development. The alternative hinted at in this film would be to develop the fishing industry, but this would require confronting the vested class interests represented by Haj Ibrahim. Tourism can only be part of an integrated development plan—not a short term way to gain foreign exchange and the making of quick fortunes for the Haj Ibrahims of this world.

Nigel Disney

The Palestinian Produced by Vanessa Redgrave; directed by Roy Battersby; Vanessa Redgrave Productions Ltd., 1977; 257 minutes; color.

The Palestinian cost around \$200,000 to produce. The result is a long and boring film. For those who already know something about the Palestinians and the situation in Lebanon there is nothing new; those who are not familiar with the situation will leave the film even more confused than when they went in. They will also leave wondering whether the film was about the Palestinians or about Redgrave's reactions to their plight.

The first half hour of the film consists of an interview with Yusif Iraqi, a doctor who treated the sick and wounded of Tel Zaatar refugee camp in Lebanon. He gives a moving account of the conditions in the camp during the long siege, and of the massacre of his nurses when the Phalangists overran the camp (Iraqi only survived because he was recognized by a Phalangist former patient). As cinema, it is very tedious: a close up of the doctor's head interspersed with the occasional view of Vanessa Redgrave's head; we get one shot of the rubble of Tel Zaatar. The makers had sufficient money at their disposal to have purchased some footage from newsreel coverage of the siege to illustrate the doctor's account.

The film then examines various aspects of Palestinian life: children receiving military training; *samed* workshops; a hospital in the requisitioned offices of Gulf Air in Beirut. After about 90 minutes the film moves on to some political analysis starting with interviews of rightist leaders (Pierre Gemayel, Cherbal Kassis and George Waring). But anyone who can not identify Lebanese rightist leaders by their faces will find this section totally incomprehensible. They are not identified either by voice-over commentary or by subtitles. The sequence is done beautifully: while the rightist leaders speak, the cameras pan over their luxurious residences, an excellent counterpoint to Gemayel's contention that the Lebanese civil war was a result of international communism manipulating the notion of social justice. There is one shot in particular that sticks in my mind: in the foreground two couples sun themselves on the beach while in the background silhouetted against the skyline two workers break up stones with sledgehammers—class society captured in one shot.

Vanessa Redgrave and her crew then move off to southern Lebanon. We see shots of fighting but are not told precisely who is fighting. The Palestinians are fighting somebody: but is it the Israelis, the Syrians, or the rightists (or all three simultaneously)? Again the lack of commentary to explain the situation leaves the viewer confused. There are discussions about the situation in southern Lebanon. Those who understand the strategic significance of the Litani river will have no difficulty in following these discussions—tough luck for those who don't.

The film draws to an end with an 'interview' with Yasser Arafat (again unidentified). At least, Arafat thinks it is an interview, pausing frequently to let Redgrave ask a question. But she is so mesmerized by his presence that she is tongue-tied. So Arafat is left to ramble on for 15 minutes (it may in reality have been shorter than that—but after two hours time was passing very slowly). The film then finally ends on the theme of armed struggle. There is a ludicrous scene of Vanessa Redgrave dancing with a Kalashnikov, and finally a blindfolded Palestinian child dismantling and reassembling the gun.

Given the amount of money spent on the film and the revolutionary credentials of those involved—Vanessa Redgrave

is a member of the Workers Revolutionary Party, a British Trotskyist organization—I expected a vastly superior product. The makers describe it as a 'documentary epic'. I would call it an epic bore. The film cannot make up its mind what it wants to be: at times it lets the Palestinians speak for themselves; at other times it attempts to be a TV documentary. There are talking heads, the inevitable interviews conducted in noisy streets guaranteeing that parts of the conversations are inaudible. During the sequence with the rightist leaders it even aspires to the status of a political film, utilizing the contradictions between the soundtrack and the visuals to make a political point. But as none of these different possible modes of producing a film ever become dominant, it remains a disappointing and confusing mish-mash.

The role of Redgrave is also confusing. The film is sometimes as much about Redgrave's reactions to the plight of the Palestinians as to the actual plight of the Palestinians. During the hospital sequence a girl crippled during the fighting is shown—but almost as soon as we have registered her presence the camera cuts to show Redgrave's reaction. Similarly in southern Lebanon there is a scene of a family descending into a basement to escape (Israeli? rightist? Syrian?—who knows) bombardment. As the family piles into the basement the camera zooms in on Redgrave. I don't doubt the sincerity of Redgrave's feelings towards the Palestinians—but I don't want to spend two and a half hours watching it on film. Many people will regard the film as a vehicle to promote Redgrave—a feeling reinforced by the cast being listed as "Vanessa Redgrave and the People of Palestine and Lebanon."

There is a crying need for a film that will explain the situation of the Palestinians and the civil war in Lebanon to an audience not familiar with what is happening there. *The Palestinian* does not fill this gap. If someone has another \$200,000 to spend for a film on the Palestinians, I hope it goes to people who have some understanding of Palestine, Lebanon and most importantly how to make an intelligible film.

Nigel Disney

As a result of The Palestinian, Vanessa Redgrave has become the object of the Jewish Defense League's wrath. The JDL demonstrated against her during the Academy Award presentations in Los Angeles on April 3, 1978. In accepting the award for Best Supporting Actress in the film Julia, in which she portrays a woman fighting against Nazism, Redgrave responded to the audience and Academy:

"You should be very proud that in the last few weeks you stood firm and you refused to be intimidated by the threats of a small bunch of Zionist hoodlums whose behavior is an insult to the stature of Jews all over the world and to their great and heroic record of struggle against Fascism and oppression. I salute that record and I salute all of you for having stood firm and dealt the final blow against that period when Nixon and McCarthy launched a worldwide witch hunt against those who tried to express in their lives and their work the truths that they believe in. I salute you and I thank you and I pledge to you that I'll continue to fight against anti-Semitism and Fascism."

Whatever the weaknesses of The Palestinian, Redgrave is to be congratulated for her courage to defy the pressures trying to stifle her political views, and for her dedication to the struggle of the Palestinian people.

—L.B.

RESPONSE

THE ISRAELI COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE RADICAL ANTI-ZIONIST LEFT

The aim of this short piece is to satisfy an understandable curiosity on the part of the readers of *MERIP Reports* about the nature of Israel's radical left and its relations with the Israeli Community Party (Rakah). During a *MERIP* interview (*MERIP Reports* No. 55) Tewfiq Zayyad, mayor of Nazareth and Rakah leader, was questioned on the relations between Rakah and what *MERIP* referred to as the "new Left."

Instead of answering the question he was asked, Zayyad gave his opinion of the political line of the radical anti-Zionist left. Having started off with several derogatory epithets (infantile, very small, young people, utopian), Zayyad discussed a series of political positions which have nothing to do with those of the radical left, apparently preferring slander and medley of opinions to any political debate.

For example, Zayyad stated that the anti-Zionist organizations equate the "role of the Israeli government in the Middle East with that of the Arab reactionaries in the Arab world." Nothing could be farther from the truth. The anti-Zionist organizations have always maintained that there is no symmetry between the Zionist state and the Arab regimes. Furthermore, contrary to the Israeli CP, which held a position of neutrality during the last two wars (even supporting Israel during the 1948 war), the anti-Zionist and more particularly the Revolutionary Communist League (Matzpen-Marxist) have carried this non-symmetry to its practical conclusion: the support of the Arab position against the Zionist state. Who then, in reality, draws a line of similarity between the two, and who rejects this reasoning?

Zayyad later follows with the statement, "... They don't see any place for a solution or the liquidation of occupation before the victory of socialism in Israel and the Arab world..." This is false. Anyone reading our propaganda and that of the different anti-Zionist organizations will know perfectly well that our positions are the opposite: a) We are in complete support of the struggle against the occupation, and since June 1967 we have demanded the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories. Rakah, however, calls for a withdrawal within the framework of negotiations. b) We believe that Israeli withdrawal could occur under varying circumstances (negotiations, military defeat), which depend upon the balance of power between several parties, and therefore we do not support all the possible means by which this withdrawal might come about, nor the conditions which might be imposed upon the Palestinian people in exchange for a withdrawal (for example, a Geneva conference under US hegemony which included the liquidation of the Palestinian resistance). c) We do not believe that the occupied territories will be liberated only after the Jewish masses have liberated themselves from Zionism. On the contrary, we believe that the liberation of large sections of the Jewish population depends on a change in the balance of power between Israel and the Arab anti-imperialist movement and its partial victories over Israel.

Zayyad tries to hide the actual debate which exists between Rakah and the radical anti-Zionist left, with a misleading discussion of positions which are not ours. We can outline this debate in three points:

1. The Israeli CP, although rejecting Zionist ideology,

accepts the legitimacy of the state of Israel, within its pre-1967 borders, and even recognizes its legitimacy as a *Jewish state* (18th Congress, 1976). The anti-Zionists refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the state of Israel, a colonial entity and the outpost of imperialism in the Arab East.

2. The Israeli CP determines its position towards the various Arab regimes not according to their class character, but rather according to their relations with the Soviet Union. The anti-Zionist revolutionaries oppose the Arab regimes, because their interests as bourgeois regimes (of various sorts) are in contradiction with the masses' interests and struggle against imperialism and Zionism.

3. The Israeli CP is trying in every way to establish a "Peace Front" with the moderate Zionist forces, which it considers to be its closest allies. The radical anti-Zionist left does not see the Zionist left as allies, even though we are ready to collaborate on specific goals. Rather than a "Peace Front," our aim is to establish a broad Anti-Zionist Front, including Rakah, the anti-Zionist revolutionary organizations, and the various militant nationalist formations in the Palestinian population of Israel.

This is the real debate which should be carried out inside the Israeli left. In *MERIP Reports*, Zayyad prefers fabrication; in Israel itself his colleagues are less discreet and more overt: slander and insults replace debate and collaboration in the struggle. These activities have been stepped up during the last year, and we would like to go directly into the reasons.

The radicalization of the Palestinian population of Israel, a direct consequence of the vitality of the Palestinian national movement after the 1967 war, started a political reorganization within the vanguard of the Palestinian population. The Israeli CP also grew stronger, a natural development of traditional parties in a period of growing radicalism. Therefore it was partially within the framework of the CP that the Palestinian masses expressed their rejection of Zionist policies: the Day of the Land* is a good example. At the same time, however, new political forces emerged. The various Arab student unions began to take on a clearer political role, more critical than Rakah's moderate line. In a dozen villages, radical and militant structures appeared. *Ibna al Balad* (Sons of the Village) recruited a great many members, especially among the young, who are unwilling to follow Rakah's capitulatory line, underlined by the new strategy of the "Peace Front." These radical national structures are rooted in the *Al Ard* nationalist movement, even though most of the members did not participate in the brief life of that movement. As with *Al Ard*, their perspective on the formation of a nationalist Palestinian party is more radical than the policy of the Israeli CP.

The radical anti-Zionist organizations, and especially the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL), have also witnessed a considerable broadening of their audience among the Israeli Arab population. This is due to a real change in their political activity (which used to be centered essentially if not exclusively in the Jewish population), and to the phenomenon of radicalization itself. Today the RCL has a majority of Arab members, its publications are more than 50 percent in Arabic, and its political presence within the Arab population is real, although still limited. This is also true, although to a lesser degree, of the other radical political groups.

* On March 30, 1976 demonstrations and strikes protesting land confiscation were held in the Galilee region and West Bank. The protests met with severe Israeli repression. March 30, Land Day, has become an annual event.

The Israeli CP is thus confronted with a double contradiction: as the Palestinian population becomes more and more radical, the CP is opting ostensibly for an open policy toward the moderate Zionists, implying increasing moderation towards the Jewish state. At the same time, an emerging radical nationalist, and revolutionary, anti-Zionist movement has ever greater credibility in the eyes of the masses including those in the CP. Each step by Rakah in the direction of the Zionist organizations strengthens this critical current and puts into question the CP's monopoly over the Arab population of Israel.

It is true that the balance of power is still largely in favor of the CP. Nevertheless, the radical political forces have clearly emerged in the course of the last two years.

—At the electoral level, the votes of the *Ibna al Balad* have significantly eaten into the CP electorate, and have even beaten the CP in districts where the latter was relatively weak.

—In several mass mobilizations, including the Day of the Land 1977, the various radical organizations did not prevent the CP from sabotaging the struggle of the Palestinian masses, but proved that they were capable of gathering, on their own initiative, a large vanguard. (On March 30, 1977, the RCL, the Union of Arab Students of Jerusalem, and some *Ibna al Balad* organized a demonstration of several thousand people between Arabeh and Sakhnin despite the CP, which tried everything to demobilize the masses.)

—The call for abstention [in the 1977 national election] by certain radical anti-Zionist groups had a very large response: thousands of people attended the meetings and the number of political abstentions can be placed at 12,000, or one-seventh of the membership of the Israeli CP.

What is the attitude of the Israeli CP toward this new phenomenon? The best example can be found in the response of the Rakah leaders to the criticism and the activities of the radical groups on the Day of the Land 1977. An editorial in the CP paper, *Al Ittihad*, published a few days after March 30, contained the most grotesque insults and flagrant lies,

coming close at several points to playing informants. The RCL and the Union of Arab Students of Jerusalem were described as: fleas, provocateurs, hoods; accused of inciting the masses to take up arms against the regime and of being supported in this endeavor by the Zionist police! All of this for having refused to accept the capitulation of the CP and having called upon the Palestinian masses to continue the struggle against the Judaization of Galilee. Rakah, not satisfied with insults, strikes out at the militants of the radical left, and overtly threatens to use violence systematically if the "leftists" do not stop their activities.

This hysterical reaction of the CP, even if easily explainable, is unacceptable and in the final analysis, suicidal. In inciting the Zionist authorities against the "extremists," Rakah gives them "carte blanche" for taking repressive measures which will not be limited to the radical organizations. The actions taken against our comrade Lea Tsemel, which the CP did not protest, were immediately used against Felicia Langer [a member of the CP], and the provocations against the Arab students of Jerusalem were followed by those against the students of Haifa, where the CP influence predominates.

In the face of the insults and the divisive policies of Rakah, the anti-Zionist groups or the radical left are calling for the widest possible unity of action and for the formation of an Anti-Zionist Front, open to all those forces opposing Zionist national oppression, including the CP, of course.

All attempts by the CP to gain credibility with the Zionist parties and the regime, by trying to isolate the radical anti-Zionists and surrendering them to Zionist repression, do not serve the interests of the masses—Jewish or Arab—but only those of the state. Only unity in the struggle coupled with a continuing (and needed) political debate (not a series of insults) can defeat the repression which is being prepared against the Palestinian national movement in Israel, and can give a new impetus to the fight against the Zionist regime.

—Michel Warschawski

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URGENT APPEAL FOR REFUGEE RELIEF

Urgent appeals have come from Lebanon for aid for Palestinian and Lebanese refugees. Contributions may be sent to the Palestine Solidarity Committee, Box 1757 Manhattanville Station, New York, NY 10027; or to the Middle East Philanthropic Fund, 1145 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138. Please make checks payable to either organization.

continued from p. 11

If we take literally the remarks by the planners of the "Litani campaign" in the cabinet and in the IDF general headquarters, we find that the planners assumed that this campaign would push the Syrians toward reaching a settlement with Israel on the matter of the terrorists in southern Lebanon. Maybe this appears to be absurd, but this is an assumption which is heard again and again with reference to one of the main objectives of the campaign: to change the situation in southern Lebanon.

Israel, then, thought that it would not be able to do this on its own and that it needed partners. It appears that the partners were to have been the Syrians and not the United Nations. Just as the war of attrition in the Jordan Rift Valley caused the government of Jordan to become our partner in controlling the terrorists, and just as the Syrians are silent partners in preventing terrorist actions from the Golan Heights, so it was expected that Damascus would be a silent partner, too, in this matter in southern Lebanon. It is clear that Israel would have had to give a certain quid pro quo to Damascus

. . . In Israel it is claimed that the Americans disrupted the "Syrian process" because they rushed to push the United Nations in. When their proposal was put forward in the Security Council, Israel had no choice but to run to the Litani. In other words, if Israel took over all of southern Lebanon it was because of the US proposal demanding the evacuation of the IDF and the immediate stationing of UN forces in the area

. . . Another important question is: How and why was it determined that the first stage of the campaign should be conducted on a strip of about 10 km. Those close to the minister of defense say that the orders on the campaign did not speak at all of a security strip of 10 km, but that key points to be taken by the IDF were determined (such as (Ras Biyada), Bint Jubayl, At Tayyibah, Al Khiyam) about 4-8 km from the border. This strip recalls that clause in the Shtaura agreement which determined that the terrorists should withdraw to a line 10 km from the Israeli border. At that time the Americans appeared to be satisfied with the agreement, but Israel claimed that it was not. It may be that, in speaking of such a strip, Israel wanted to satisfy the Americans.

The 10-km line had no military significance other than that. The only military reasoning is that an advance to such a distance would fulfill the objective of unifying the Christian enclaves. A line with military significance could be held along geographical lines, such as the Litani River.

Ze'ev Schiff commentary in *Ha'aretz*, March 31, 1978

Christian forces in southern Lebanon joined the Israeli attack, marking the first time in Israel's history that foreign troops have fought alongside its forces. Israeli troops passing through Christian villages were cheered and pelted with sweets and flowers

The Lebanese Christians participated with their own Sherman tanks, artillery and troops. They also guided Israeli forces.

The commander of the Christian forces, Major Sa'ad Hadad, said "I've been waiting for this night a long time"

Jerusalem Post, March 16, 1978

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